

Proposed 2024 FCDC Bylaws Changes

The following changes were recommended for adoption by the Steering Committee on December 12, 2023:

1. Enabling Electronic Meetings

Proposed by Bryan Graham, County Chair

Summary

Adds a provision to the Bylaws allowing all parts of FCDC to have virtual or hybrid meetings as necessary.

Rationale

With the COVID emergency over and without explicit authorization to conduct virtual meetings in our bylaws, the legality of our committee actions could be questioned. While we want to resume much in-person activity, the virtual meeting should be permitted as a tool which makes it easier for many of our members to participate in the various meetings of our committee.

Text of Proposed Change

Article VIII, Add Section 11: “Except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, FCDC meetings and meetings of its component committees and caucuses may, at the discretion of the respective Chair, be conducted through the use of Internet or teleconference meeting services in addition to or in place of an in-person meeting.”

2. Creating a Membership Standing Committee

Proposed by Bryan Graham, County Chair

Summary

Creates a Membership Standing Committee, chaired by the Vice Chair of Membership, and composed of district representatives.

Rationale

District representatives have already been informally working as an FCDC “Membership Committee” in coordination with the Co-Vice Chairs of Membership, and this simply formalizes and empowers this committee.

Text of Proposed Change

Article IV, Section 4: Add “the Vice Chair of Membership shall be the Chair of the Membership Committee,”

Article VII, Section 1, Clause a: Add “Membership,” in the appropriate alphabetical order location.

3. Merge Newsletter into Central Communications

Proposed by Bryan Graham, County Chair

Summary

Removes the separate Newsletter Standing Committee.

Rationale

The tradition of FCDC's The Democrat Newsletter method of communication is no longer necessary in the age of email. The creation of the regular emails informing the committee on activities has fallen to the Central Communications committee, whereas the Newsletter committee has switched to publishing articles on the Blue View. This change centralizes communications leadership, and allows for the C3 chair to make their own decisions regarding the format and platforms for external and internal communications.

Text of Proposed Change

Article VII, Section 1, Clause a: Remove "Newsletter,".

4. Allow for Fee Waivers for Ex Officio Members

Proposed by Bryan Graham, County Chair

Summary

Allows persons entitled to ex officio voting membership in FCDC to be a member if they submit a statement of inability to pay.

Rationale

Individuals entitled to ex officio voting membership, such as elected members of State Central or officers of FCDC, under the current bylaws are denied their automatic position on the committee if they are not able to pay the membership fee. Since ex officio members do not count towards the membership cap, this also denies a slot for elected voting membership within their district under the current rules. While we encourage those who can pay to support the committee, the inability of a person holding a position that warrants membership to pay should not impede their right to a seat on the committee.

Text of Proposed Change

Article III, Section 2, Clause c: Add prior to the sublist of ex officio persons " or completing the statement of inability to pay"

5. Flexible Fee Waiver Procedure

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Allows the County Chair or their designee to approve fee waiver requests for new members.

Rationale

The current system for approving fee waiver requests for new members restricts the power of approval to only district chairs. There is no explicit recourse or process for appeals should a district chair withhold approval, or if approval is not granted in time for a deadline. There have even been situations in the past when members have been denied voting membership status at reorganization due to email bottlenecks or forwarding glitches. Allowing the additional input of the County Chair enables procedural flexibility.

Text of Proposed Change

Article III, Section 5, change to:

Declarations of candidacy for election to the County Committee shall be accompanied by a filing fee in an amount fixed by the County Committee; fees shall be waived for any Democrat who signs a statement of inability to pay in the form prescribed by the County Committee and receives approval of such form from the Chair of their District Committee, **the County Chair**, or **the any of these** Chair's designees.

6. Diversity and Outreach Committee Chair

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Clarifies that the Chair of Diversity and Outreach shall be chair of their committee.

Rationale

A clerical oversight in the bylaws has created the Diversity and Outreach Committee but does not explicitly state that the elected Vice Chair of Diversity and Outreach shall be its chair.

Text of Proposed Change

Article IV Section 4, add: "the Vice Chair of Diversity and Outreach shall be the Chair of the Diversity and Outreach committee"

7. Notice for Officer Vacancies and Interim Appointments

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Clarifies the requirement for seven days' notice of officer vacancies to be filled by election at the next meeting of the County Committee, consistent with other meeting notice requirements in the bylaws. Enables the County Chair to appoint acting officers to fill vacancies in the interim.

Rationale

Officer vacancies do occur and FCDC must be prepared to operate in the absence of officers in various positions. At present, an officer vacancy with insufficient time for notice to be provided to the County Committee may result in as many as two months and seven days to pass before the vacancy can be filled by election.

Text of Proposed Change

Insert as the second sentence to Article IV Section 7: “Notice of vacancies shall be provided at least seven days in advance of the election. The County Chair shall appoint an acting officer to fill any such vacancies until it can be filled by an election.”

8. Require District Committees to Elect Ranking Vice Chairs

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Adds ranking Vice Chair to the list of officers required by the bylaws to be elected by a district committee.

Rationale

District Committees, when a vacancy occurs in their chair, need a designated interim chair to serve until a replacement chair is elected, much in the same way that FCDC has its regional vice chairs. The County Chair may rule that district co-chairs satisfy this requirement.

Text of Proposed Change

Article V, Section 3, change to:

The Voting Members of each District Committee shall elect a Chair, **a ranking Vice Chair**, a Secretary, and such other officers as they see fit, and may adopt bylaws consistent with these Bylaws and the State Party Plan.

9. Easy Reorganization for Inactive Standing Committees or Caucuses

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Decreases the timeframe where standing committees and caucuses must meet their minimum requirements to be considered active, allowing inactive committees and caucuses to easily reorganize to prevent long periods of time when a committee or caucus is inactive.

Rationale

Presently, a standing committee or caucus must fail to meet its minimum requirements for active status for an entire year before being considered inactive. This prevents an orderly reorganization from promptly occurring when a committee or caucus is inactive

Text of Proposed Change

Article VII, Section 6, change to:

Standing committees and caucuses must hold ~~six~~**three** meetings and/or events, either in-person or virtual, and have members from at least four of the county’s magisterial districts over the preceding ~~12~~**six** months to be considered active. Records of activity and membership must be maintained and provided to the Corresponding Secretary at

least every three months. The Corresponding Secretary will notify the county chair and the standing committee or caucus chair, if any, if a caucus or standing committee is not meeting this criteria over the last ~~nine~~**three** months, and again when a standing committee or caucus is longer considered active.

10. Creates Position of Sergeant-at-Arms

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Creates the position of Sergeant-at-Arms, appointed by the County Chair, to assist the chair in the logistical administration of county committee meetings. They are not a member of Steering.

Rationale

The logistical burden of putting on meetings of the County Committee are even greater now that virtual attendance options have gained widespread acceptance and are now the expectation.

Text of Proposed Change

Article VII, Section 12, change to:

The County Chair may appoint a Webmaster, VAN Administrator, **Sergeant-at-Arms**, and a Communications Adviser, to assist with these stated jobs and advise the Chair, Steering Committee, and District committees, but shall not serve as members of the Steering Committee in these roles.

11. Clarifies that the Chair of C3 is Appointed by the County Chair

Proposed by Aaron Yohai, Vice Chair Central

Summary

Clarifies in the bylaws that the Chair of the Central Communications Standing Committee is appointed by the County Chair, which is consistent with the longstanding custom of FCDC.

Rationale

Official communications are a highly-sensitive department for any political organization and must work in close correspondence with the organization's leader. An oversight in the bylaws has made unclear that the C3 Chair is appointed, as they have been for many years.

Text of Proposed Change

Article VII Section 1: Add: "The Central Communications committee shall have one member appointed by each of the District Chairs. The Chair of the Central Communications Committee shall be appointed by the County Chair."

12. Updates to Emeritus Members

Proposed by Debra Linick, Franconia Chair

Summary

Enables District Committees to elect Emeritus Members at any time, and clarifies that Emeritus members who have not sought membership for more than two reorganizations are no longer Emeritus members.

Rationale

The current bylaws only allow for Emeritus members to be elected at reorganization meetings (i.e., every two years). This makes it harder to honor deserving members if there are any vacancies. There were also some questions about when someone stops being an Emeritus member if they do not rejoin the committee. This clarifies that a vacancy is created if someone does not seek membership during the last two reorganizations, in addition to the situations that someone moves from the County or passes away.

Text of Proposed Change

Article III, Section 2: Add: "Up to four persons per Supervisor District who have been members of the County Committee for at least 20 years or elected officials who have represented Fairfax County for at least 10 years may be elected ~~by a~~ ~~at the~~ District ~~reorganization caucuses~~ Committee as Emeritus Members. Payment of the filing fees for Emeritus Members shall be optional, but they shall be Voting members if they reside in Fairfax County and upon signing a filing form. ~~Emeritus members who have not signed a filing form for the last two reorganizations create vacancies that may be replaced by the District Committee.~~"

The following change was proposed after the last Steering Committee meeting and has not been considered by Steering:

13. Additions to Closed Session Exceptions

Proposed by Dan Press, Co-Chair ELVP and Bryan Graham, Chair

Summary

Allows for new situations where an FCDC committee meeting may go into closed session (i.e., exclude members of the public) in sensitive situations where we are discussing the conduct of a member related to discipline and for the ELVP committee to discuss legal issues.

Rationale

The current bylaws restrict when a meeting can go into closed session. While we are obligated to conduct our business out in the open, we don't want to expose the Committee to legal risk when topics of a sensitive nature are discussed or when we may be exposing sensitive legal strategy.

Text of Proposed Change

Article VIII, Section 9: Add new sections c and d:

- "c. any General or District Committee meeting discussion related to discipline or removal of an officer or member shall be closed, but the motion and voting must be done in public; and,
- d. any meeting of the Election Law and Voter Protection Standing Committee may be closed for discussions related to legal advice, strategy, or litigation in which the County Committee or any Democratic Nominee or Endorsee is, or is likely to become, a party or involved."